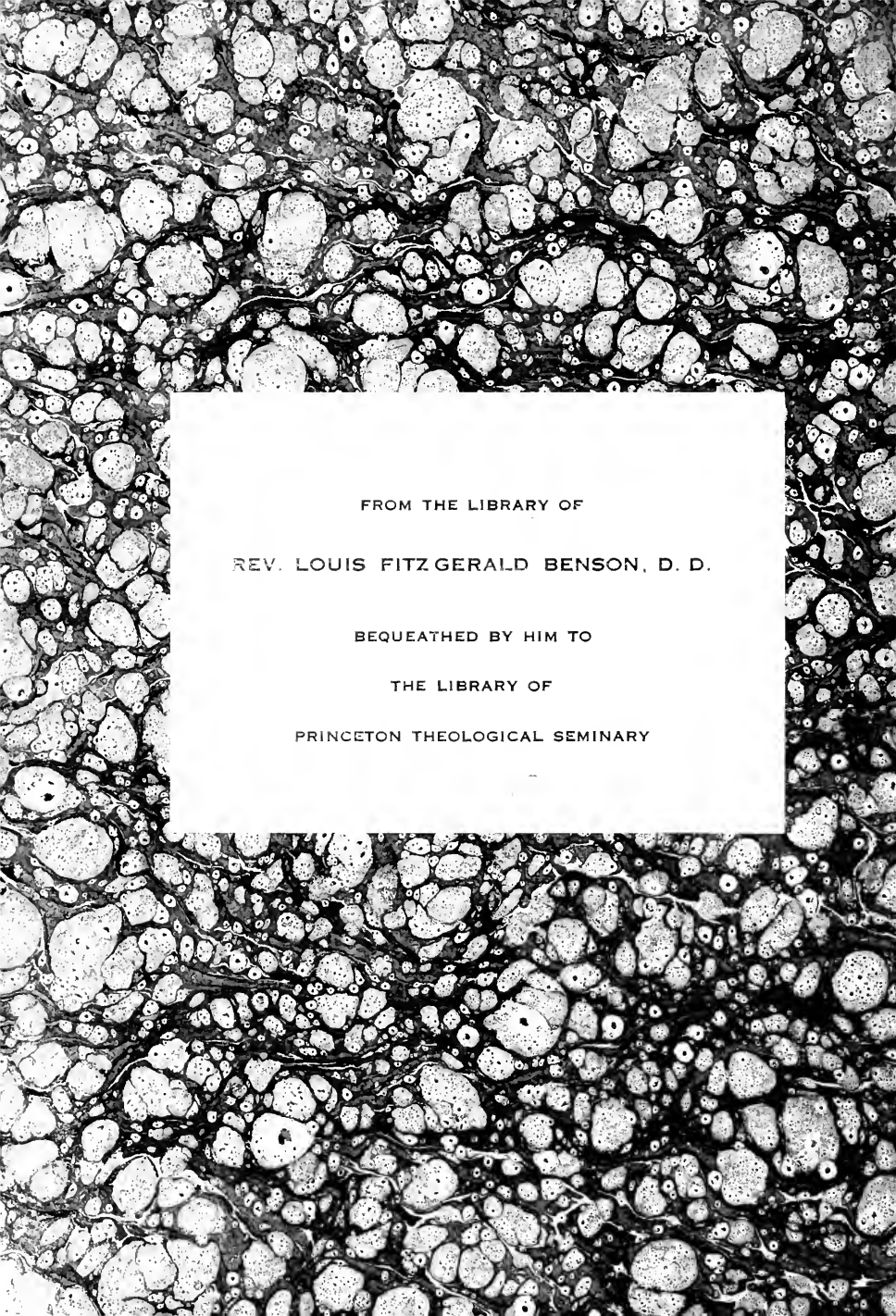




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The background of the image is a dense, black and white marbled paper pattern. It features a complex, organic texture with numerous irregular, light-colored spots and blotches of varying sizes, some containing smaller dark specks, set against a darker, more continuous background. This pattern resembles traditional stone or shell marbling. A large, solid white rectangular label is positioned in the center of the image, containing the following text in a serif font:

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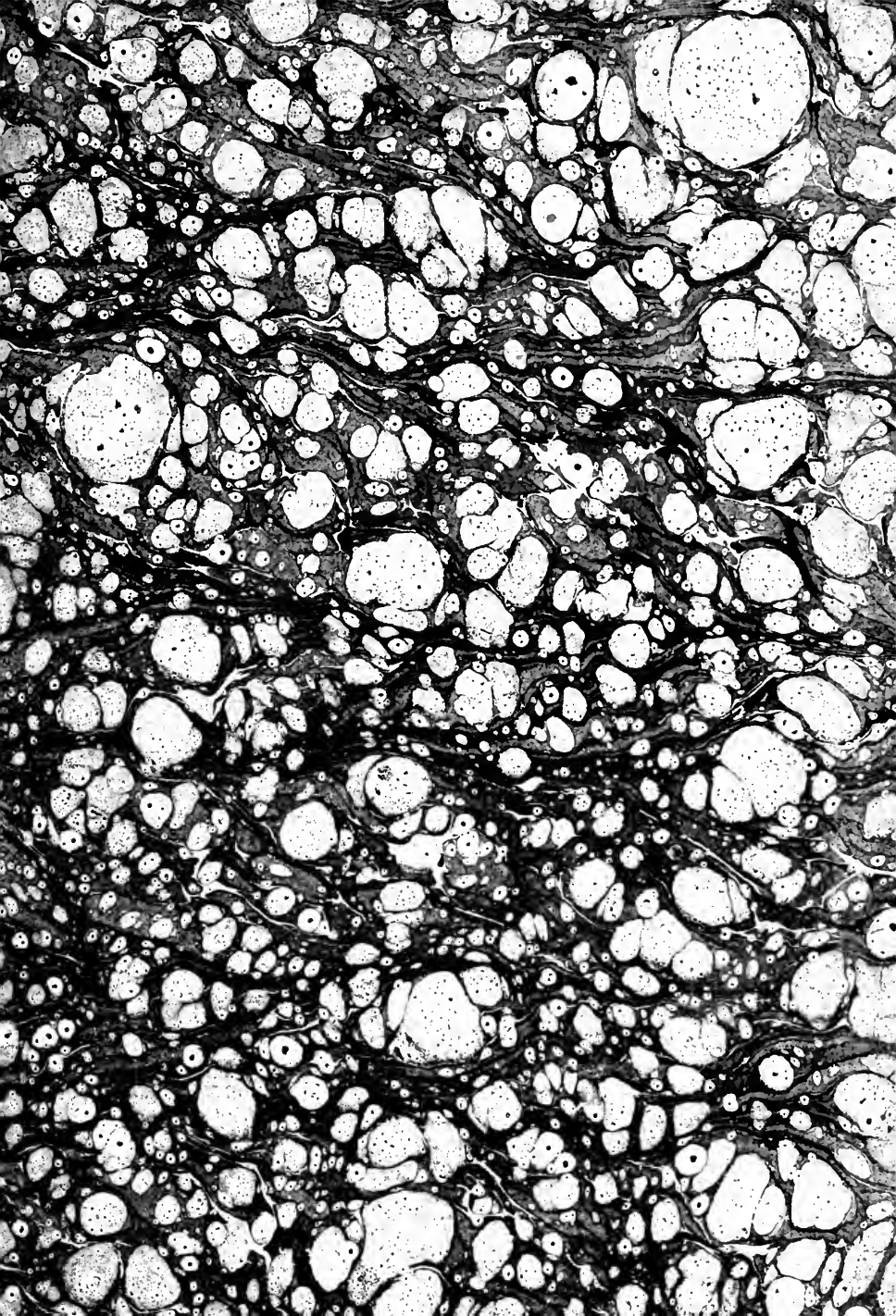
REV. LOUIS FITZGERALD BENSON, D. D.

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—



A
L E T T E R

T O

Those of his Brethren

In the

M I N I S T E R Y

Who refuse to admit

The Rev. Mr. *Whitefield*

Into their Pulpits.

By *William Shurtleff*, M. A.

And Pastor of the second Church in *Portsmouth* in *New-Hampshire*.

With an APPENDIX containing the *Concurrence* of *some other*
Ministers.

B O S T O N :

Printed and Sold by SAMUEL KNEELAND and TIMOTHY GREEN
in Queen-Street. 1745.

THE HISTORY

OF

THE LIFE OF HIS BROTHER

AND

THE HISTORY OF HIS BROTHER

AND

THE HISTORY OF HIS BROTHER

AND

THE HISTORY OF HIS BROTHER

AND

AND

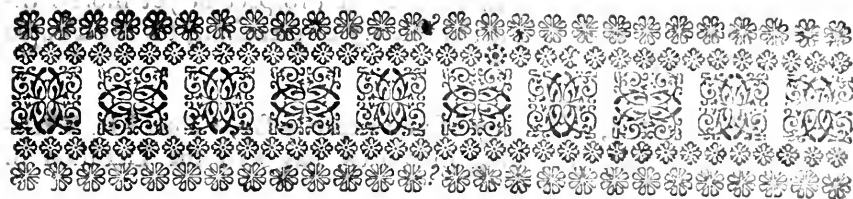
THE HISTORY OF HIS BROTHER

AND

THE HISTORY OF HIS BROTHER

AND

AND



Mr. *Shurtleff's* Letter, &c.

Reverend and Beloved,

HAVING many of you seen fit to publish your Determination of not admitting the Rev. Mr. *Whitefield* into your Pulpits, and more than implicitly censur'd your Brethren who have conducted themselves towards him in a different Manner: It can't be just Matter of Offence, that one of them takes the Liberty of addressing you in this public Way; especially seeing you are some of you grown so shy, and become such Strangers of late, that he is depriv'd of the Opportunity he has sometimes wish'd for of privately conferring with you upon the foregoing Head.

That so many are turn'd aside to *vain Jangling*, I think calls for Lamentation, and if I know my self, I am a hearty Mourner for that Spirit of Discord that is gone forth, and so far prevails among *Ministers* as well as *private Christians*. If what I am now writing should have any Tendency to increase it, and be a Means of further alienating your Affections, I shall be very sorry: Tho' let what will be the Event, it will be some Support to me, that I am acted by right Views. And as I find my self in the Exercise of brotherly Love, I shall endeavour to preserve that *Gentleness* and *Meekness* that so peculiarly becomes our high and heavenly Profession.

To come then to the Matter in Hand; in refusing Mr. *Whitefield* the Liberty of your Pulpits, you go upon *this Supposition*, that he has been already the Instrument of much Mischief to the Churches of

CHRIST.

CHRIST in this Land, and that there is a Prospect of yet more Mischief, should he be indulg'd the Liberty of preaching to the People of your Charge.

I. You suppose, and many of you expressly say, 'That Mr. *Whitefield* by his former preaching among us, has been the Occasion of 'much Mischief to the Churches of this Land.

You allow that there is a considerable *Alteration* in the *State of Religion* in these Churches now, from what it was some Years ago, and that Mr. *Whitefield* has been one great Instrument of it, and so far we are agreed. But then you affirm, 'That this *Alteration* that 'there is in the *State of Religion* is for the *worse*, and that he is to 'be look'd upon as the *blameable Cause* of all the Disorders that have 'arisen among us.' And herein I am obliged to differ from you.

[1.] I can by no Means allow that the *State of Religion* in the Churches of this Land is really alter'd for the *worse* within these *four or five Years* past: and that you and I may form a right Judgment of the Matter, let us view it, as it was *before* that Time, and as it has been *since*.

1. Let us look a little back, and take a View of the *State of Religion* as it was in these Churches *five Years ago*, and for *some Time before*.

An affecting Spectacle I confess! what no serious Christian could behold in the Time of it, without a heavy Heart, and scarce without a weeping Eye. To see that solid and substantial Piety for which our Ancestors were so justly renowned, having long languish'd under sore Decays, brought so very low, and seemingly just ready to expire and give up the Ghost.

How did not only *Pelagianism*, but *Arianism*, *Socinianism*, and even *Deism* itself, and what is falsely call'd by the Name of *Free-thinking*, here and there prevail? How much was it grown into Fashion to throw off all Manner of Regard to strict and serious Godliness? How many seem'd ashamed of the Dress? and of those that wore the Garb, and kept up the *Form*, what Numbers were there that were content with this, and had but little else? The *instituted Means of Salvation*, it's evident in many Places, were but lightly esteem'd, and a horrid Contempt was put upon the *Ministry of the Word*! When there was no more than a *Monthly Lecture* even in a large Parish, what

a small Handful should we find attending upon it? Indeed upon the *Lord's-Day*, when the Season was inviting, and there was nothing in the Way, there would (it may be) be what some call a handsome Appearance: That is, there would be a Number of Persons of both Sexes, especially in some Congregations, richly and curiously dress'd, and making as fine and glittering a Shew as if this was the Thing they chiefly aim'd at; which, with some might possibly be what they had principally in View. Accordingly how remote were they for the most Part from that Seriousness and Solemnity that became the Place where they were, and the Business they were about? How little did they behave as those that came to converse with an infinitely holy and glorious GOD; and to secure the Salvation of a Soul, which, tho' immortal, and of more Worth than the whole World, was in Danger of being lost for ever? Even whilst the Word of God was dispensed, how many Eyes, if they were not slumbering, would be wandering and gazing? And how little Heed did the Generality give to the Things that they heard? What Numbers were there, who having after a Sort attended on the Sermon, and so perform'd their Task, went away satisfied as if there was nothing further required? How seldom was it that the Word made any abiding Impressions on the Hearers? And sometimes it may be it was but poorly adapted to this Purpose.

We who took upon us to be *Masters of Assemblies*, upon Reflection may find Occasion to charge our selves with being too dull and sluggish, careless and negligent in our public Ministrations. I would not be understood to insinuate that this was universally the Case. There were doubtless Exceptions to the contrary. But what I intend is, that it was too commonly so, or at least that there were too many mournful Instances of it. It's well if we were none of us among those *that corrupt the Word*. But if we were not Teachers of Doctrines that are grossly and notoriously false; are there not *some weighty Points*, such as that of *Original Sin*, *Regeneration* and *Conversion*, *Justification by Faith only*, &c. that have not been so fully and thoroughly handled, so clearly explained, and so strongly pressed as they might, and ought to have been? By which Means too many of our People have had but very confused and indifferent Notions of them; and if they have own'd them as Truths, have not had a just Sense of the *Importance* of them. And tho' we saw but little Fruit of our Labours in those

Times I am speaking of, how many Ways did we find to satisfy our selves, and how easy were we in our want of Success? Were we, one and another of us upon this Account, crying out with the Prophet, *Wo is me, for I am as when they have gathered the Summer Fruits, &c?* Did we constantly make it the Matter of our most bitter Lamentation before God, or was it the Subject of our Complaint one to another? No; when we met together, our Conversation too generally turn'd upon Points of a lower Nature. *Religious Conference* was so much laid aside, not only among *private Christians*, but even among *Ministers*; that it could not always be easily introduc'd. Our *Association Meetings* had not always that Seriousness in them that might be expected from Persons of our sacred Character: Insomuch that some have since told me, that being occasionally present, it was Matter of Stumbling to them to see us behave as if we had nothing further in View than to smoke and eat together, to tell a pleasant Story, and to talk of the common and ordinary Affairs of Life. To be sure, if our Discourse reach'd to Matters of Religion, it was seldom any further than to Externals and Circumstantial. You and I must own, and God grant we may make suitable Reflections upon it, that the greatest and weightiest Matters were too much neglected; that our Time was not so much of it spent as might and ought to have been in concerting Measures how to advance the Kingdom of that dear REDEEMER, to whose special Service we were solemnly devoted; and how to secure the Salvation of the precious Souls we had taken under our Watch and Charge.

These Hints may serve to give us some Representation of the *State of Religion* as it was in the Generality of the Churches in this Part of the Land, and as far as I am able to judge, in most other Parts of it, *some Years ago*. And were those such glorious and happy Days, that you should so earnestly wish, as some of you seem to do, for their Return?

I must confess that they don't appear to me in that Light. But it may be you may be ready to say; 'Tho' Things were bad then, look upon them and see if they are any Thing better; nay, whether all Things being considered, they are not less desirable now?'

Accordingly I come,

2. To take a View of the *State of Religion* in these Churches since the Time I was before speaking of.

The

The Reports that were brought among us of Mr. *Whitefield* and his Ministry ; of the Multitude that attended it, and the Manner in which they were wrought upon by it, had excited a Thoughtfulness in a great many, even before his Arrival among us : And when he came, you are sensible what Crowds came to hear him, and how generally they were wrought upon by his Preaching. As it made saving Impressions upon some ; so where it failed of this, it raised in a great Number a deep and lasting Concern as to their spiritual and eternal Interests. When Mr. *Tennent* came among us, this Concern increased and became more extensive ; so it continued after he went from us. As People long'd more to hear ; so Ministers lov'd more to preach than they had used to do, and usually spoke with greater Power. Some of them that were Strangers to true and vital Piety before, became now acquainted with it ; and others that were grown in a great Measure dead and formal, were quicken'd, stir'd up, and had new Life put into them. Some great and important *Doctrines* that before, if not wholly omitted, were but gently touch'd ; were now more largely insisted on, more clearly unfolded, and more warmly press'd. Our *Assemblies* were vastly throng'd ; and it was rare to see a careless and inattentive Hearer among them all. Their thirsty Souls seem'd greedily to drink down every Word that drop'd from the Preacher's Lips. They heard as for their Lives. And then what a divine Power accompanied the Word from one Time to another ? What Numbers are there that have been awaken'd out of their Security in Sin ; that have seen the lost and perishing State they were in ; that being in the utmost Agony and Anguish of Soul from the Apprehensions of divine Wrath, have made it their anxious Inquiry how, and in what Way to escape ; and that have been applying themselves to their Ministers, and others for Direction in this great and weighty Affair ? And tho' some soon lost their Convictions, and others that went a great Way, have since apostatiz'd and drawn back ; yet upon a strict and fair Inquiry, you will find a great many in one Place and another that are exhibiting all the Evidence that can be expected of an effectual and thorough Change ; a great many that having been *sometimes Darkness, but being now Light in the Lord, walk as Children of the Light* ; and by their good Conversation are bright and shining Ornaments to their Christian Profession.

But

But now, tho' this be acknowledg'd, and tho' as far as has been said, it be allow'd that a very glorious and delightful *Scene* is open'd to our View ; I know you will be ready to object, ' That the Brightness of it is eclipsed and obscured by Reason of the Disorders that have occur'd.' And tho' as I may hereafter have Occasion to observe, it could hardly be expected we should be perfectly free from every Thing of this Kind ; yet I heartily mourn that so much of it has arose. *Some Ministers* that were great Friends to the Revival of Religion, thro' an ungovern'd, tho' well meant Zeal, have been carried into unbecoming Extreams ; and whilst they have been much admir'd and almost idoliz'd by the People, have been left (and partly it may be for that Reason) to fall into great Indiscretions. And so it has been as to *some others*, and I make no Doubt as to some gracious Persons ; they have run into Errors of Judgment, and Errors of Practice. Some have strangely given Way to spiritual Pride ; they have discover'd too much of a censorious Spirit one towards another ; have been rash and uncharitable in judging the Ministers of CHRIST, and too ready to separate from them. I have heard of mournful Instances of this Nature in the *Colony of Connecticut* : and we have had too many Examples of it in *these Provinces*. Some have separated for no Cause, and others upon too slender Grounds. Tho' as to some that have withdrawn from the Communion to which they have belong'd ; I have sometimes thought, that if many of those that make a great Noise about Separations and other Disorders, had been treated just in the same Manner, they would have left their Ministers long ago. For you know this *dividing Spirit* is not confin'd to those that are Friends to what we esteem as a remarkable Work of God's Grace that has been going on among us. No ; those that have been disaffected to this Work have, in sundry Instances, withdrawn from their Ministers, for their firm and conscientious Attachment to it ; and where they have set up a separate Congregation, if I have been rightly inform'd, have been encourag'd and assisted in it by such as have made the loudest Complaints of the like Disposition in others. Thus I have taken a short View of the *State of Religion* as it was in these Churches *some Years ago*, and as it has been *since*.

And now Brethren, let us weigh Things maturely in our own Minds ; and consider whether the *latter State*, tho' attended with some disagreeable Circumstances, be not really, taking all Things together,

gether, more desirable than the former? How many disorderly Things does the Apostle *Paul* complain of in the Church of *Corinth*, where the Preaching of the Gospel had been accompanied with a remarkable Effusion of the Holy Spirit? He tells them of *Envy*, *and Strife*, *and Divisions*, *that were among them*, which was a Sign of their being too carnal: *One said, I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos*. They were too apt to magnify and adore one Minister, and to debase and despise another. But notwithstanding all this, so far is the Apostle from thinking they had better continued in their former State, that he could not forbear admiring and gratefully acknowledging *the Riches of divine Grace* that had been display'd among them. *I thank my God*, says he, *always on your Behalf, for the Grace of God that was given you by Jesus Christ*. In the late Times, amidst all the Disorders that have arose, there has been a deep and serious Concern among great Numbers as to the Salvation of their Souls. Not a few we have good Reason to think have been rescued from the *Powers of Darkness*, and become the Subjects of the REDEEMER's Kingdom. Now does not this which has occasion'd so much Joy in Heaven, and diffused such a Pleasure thro' the whole angelic Hosts, call for Rejoicing from us here upon Earth, and demand our cheerful Praises to the *GOD of all Grace*? Is not such a State as this preferable to that we were formerly in? when it was a rare Thing for any to be converted from the Error of their Way, and effectually brought home to God; when the Generality of those that were not openly vicious, were sunk into a dead, lifeless and formal State; when they were, the most of them it is to be fear'd, resting in their Attendance upon Ordinances, and in an external Conformity to the divine Will; and it may be too many without a just Sense and Apprehension of there being any Thing more requir'd in order to their Acceptance with God.

Now if it be really so, as I conceive it to be, that the Alteration there has been as to the State of Religion in these Churches, all Things being consider'd, be for the better and not for the worse; and if Mr. *Whitefield* has had any Hand in the Change which you seem to acknowledge, and I readily allow; I think he ought to be highly valued and regarded by us; that it becomes us to be very thankful to *him*, but above all to give *Glory* to God, that has raised up such an Instrument, and made him the Means of so much Good to us.

[2.] But then there is a *second Thing* wherein I am oblig'd to differ from you, and that is, as to Mr. *Whitefield's* being the *blameable Cause* of all the *Disorders* that have arisen among us.

This is what you all manifestly suggest, and some of you plainly declare. But it is what I can't at present be brought to allow, for the following Reasons, (1.) I suppose it is not at all likely that such an Alteration should be brought to pass, and there be any remarkable Change for the better *without some such Disorders* as have arisen among us, or others of the like Nature, from the common and ordinary Course of Things. (2.) I think I can discern *several other Causes* to which they are at least partly to be ascrib'd. And (3.) I can't find *that* in Mr. *Whitefield's* Conduct *which* can possibly bring him under the Charge of being the *blameable Cause* of all these Disorders.

1. I suppose it not at all likely for any such Alteration to be bro't about as to the State of Religion among a People, and there be any remarkable Change for the better, *without some such Disorders* as those that have arisen among us, or others of a like Nature, from the common and ordinary Course of Things.

Indeed if the *Change* was *universal*, there would be a more hopeful Prospect upon this Account. Tho' in Case it was so, if a whole People were to partake of the saving Influences of the Holy Spirit, and every Individual to be really and effectually chang'd; yet unless they were without any Remains of indwelling Sin and Corruption, or had arriv'd to such a Perfection in Knowledge and Holiness as is not to be expected in the present State; it is not likely, tho' they were of one Heart, they would be all of one Mind, and exactly agree in their Sentiments; but even in this Case *some Sort of Differences and Disorders* might arise. What then is to be expected when the Change is so far from universal, that it does *not extend* to the *bigger Part*?

It would be strange, all Things considered, if the principal *Instruments* and Agents in carrying on such a Work, did not sometimes step out of the Way, and behave somewhat amiss, being Men of *like Passions*: And it would be as strange, if the *Subjects* of it were not in some Instances misled and betray'd into some Irregularities, or other, thro' the remaining *Lusts* and Corruptions of *their own Hearts*. But then besides this, *Satan* seeing his Kingdom at such a Time shaking, and finding it diminish'd, to be sure will be sadly enrag'd, and will not fail to stir up all Manner of Disorders, as far as he is permitted.

And
wicked

wicked Men having many, if not the most of them, their carnal Peace and Rest in some Measure interrupted and disturb'd, and their Corruptions inflam'd ; will be apt to raise a mighty Clamour against such a Work, and all the Promoters of it, and set themselves all they can to oppose its Progress ; which must needs Occasion more or less of Disturbance. Accordingly, let us search the *sacred Records*, or consult any *Church History* whatsoever, ancient or modern ; and when shall we find there was any considerable Reformation among a People, or any remarkable Revival of Religion quite free from Disorders. That it should be so, is *hardly possible* in the Nature of the Thing, and what none can reasonably expect.

And then,

2. I think there are *other Causes* to be discern'd besides Mr. *Whitefield's* coming among us, to which, the Disorders that have arisen, may in a great Measure be ascrib'd. There have been Indiscretions, and Mistakes as was before said, even in *well dispos'd* Persons, *Ministers*, and *others*, from whence some of these Irregularities, may have had their Rise : But this does not throw the Fault of them upon Mr. *Whitefield*. Nay supposing they were owing to the *Conduct* of the *Itinerant Preachers* that have since been among us ; supposing they were all bad Men, and purposely carrying on an ill Design ; (which by the Way is very foreign from my Thoughts :) But I say, supposing it was so, I don't see how Mr. *Whitefield* is any more chargeable with what they have done, than the *real Apostles* of our Lord were to be faulted for those Deceivers that afterwards arose, and said they were Apostles and *were not*, but were Liars ; or than they by their working of true Miracles, became the *blameable Cause* of *Simon's Sorceries*, and made themselves guilty of the Impositions occasion'd by his Signs, and lying Wonders. And then, besides the Mischief that has arisen from the Misconduct of real and pretended *Friends* of the remarkable Work of God's Grace that has been going on among us ; it's easy to see how much Confusion has been occasion'd by *those* that have rashly and warmly *set themselves against it*. Yea, its possible, that some that have made the loudest Outcries against Disorders, may be among the principal Causes of them. And here Brethren, I hope you'll excuse my Freedom in proposing it, as a Matter of your Enquiry, Whether or no, you your selves have none of you been insensibly Faulty upon this Account ; whether you have none of you by your own Conduct ;

or

or by the Influence which your Advice has had upon others, been instrumental of the Differences and Confusions that are so much the Subject of Complaint ? But I dismiss this Head, and come to say

3. That I can't find *That* in Mr. *Whitefield's* Conduct, *which* can possibly bring him under the Charge of being the *blameable Cause* of all these Disorders.

I don't say, that he has never been rash, and that he has been free from all Manner of Imperfections : tho' I think, if his Imperfections had been less, his many shining Excellencies & Endowments might have too far attracted and fix'd our admiring Eyes ; and as some may be apt to pay him undue Honours now, the Danger then would have been greater and more extensive. But supposing we don't see his Foibles in the same Light, but that they appear greater in your Eyes, than they do in mine, they must be strangely magnified to make him the faulty Cause of all our Disorders.

If any *Part* of his *Conduct* be thought to discover any Tincture of *Enthusiasm*, which has been common with some of the most eminent and celebrated Servants of CHRIST : I can't think that his *Preaching* can be said to lay a Foundation for it, in which he always insists on the WRITTEN WORD, and not any sudden Impressions made upon our Minds, as being the Rule of our Behaviour. Nor do I conceive there is such a Spread and Prevalency of this Error, as some have been apt to imagine. Some there are I make no Doubt that are too much govern'd by Impulses : But I believe it's much more common for Persons (tho' it be a Thing allow'd by all serious Christians, that the HOLY GHOST is from Time to Time stirring us up to that which is good) to take *too little Notice* of what he secretly suggests to them ; and by far the greater Number, if they don't ridicule, it's to be fear'd in a great Measure slight, neglect, and overlook the Motions of the BLESSED SPIRIT, and are so far from Enthusiasm that they are faulty upon the other Extream.

And then as to the *Antinomian* Errors, and other dangerous Doctrines complain'd of ; I never perceiv'd or heard of any Thing in his Sermons or Conversation, when formerly among us, that had any direct Tendency to promote them. There are I suppose none of us but are liable to *Slips*, and may let drop unguarded Expressions ; and when we are cautioning our Hearers against one Extream, are apt to say some Things that are liable to be abused as countenancing the contrary :

trary : And if we had all been as curiously and *critically* watch'd as Mr. *Whitefield* has been ; we should some of us, I fear, have come off but poorly, and who of us would have escap'd so well ? But I'm persuaded you'll find it a difficult Task from any Thing he has said, to fix upon him the Charge of being the Assertor and Encourager of these, or any other false, and heretical Doctrines.

And then as to our *Separations* which are so confidently ascrib'd to him ; tho' if I remember right, there was *not an Instance* of one of them *till more than a Year* after he went from us : upon the most fair and impartial View I am able to take, I can't look upon him as their design'd Author, or as being upon any Account the main Spring and Origen of them. What looks the most plausibly this Way, and what I am sensible you are at once ready to alledge is, what he has said of the *Ministers* and *Colleges*. But I very much question, whether this has had so pernicious an Effect as some have conceiv'd. I am not pleading for the *Thing in it self*. I own it to be rash and unwarrantable, and he himself has publickly acknowledg'd it to be so. But I am speaking of the *Consequence* of it ; and question whether it has been so formidable as some have been ready to apprehend, and can't think of our *Separations* as proceeding from it. If he has express'd his Fears respecting the good State of the greater Part of the *Ministry* among us ; he has not pointed out any particular Persons as the Object of his Fears, nor call'd upon any to withdraw from them upon this Account. And granting that his thus expressing his Fears be without just Grounds, and that it may be hurtful upon some Accounts ; may it not have been serviceable upon others ? And is it not likely that he might intend it for Good ? Tho', if it was so, I don't say that his good Intention in the Thing is in it self a sufficient Vindication of it. But let it be how it will, ought we not in this Case to look beyond the *Instrument*, and to have an Eye to the SUPREAM DIRECTOR ? Did *David* observe the Hand of GOD, in the Revilings of a wicked *Shimei* ; and shall we take no Notice of it, in such an Animadversion in one whom, if we will lay aside Prejudice, we must needs account as one of his faithful Servants ? Methinks we in the Ministry should, one and another of us, upon this Occasion reflect and say, ' It is not for nothing, but is for some wise and good Purpose, ' that this our Brother has been permitted to make this Remark ; ' may I not look upon it as a Call to me to take Heed to myself,

‘ and to look narrowly into my own Heart? Accordingly I am resolved to examine my self, and to enquire more closely than ever ‘ into my own State.’ Instead of being fill’d with *Wrath* and *Bitterness* against the *Instrument*, which seems to be the Case with too many, and may be likely to prevent their looking any further; such Reflections as these appear to be proper and becoming: And I am well assur’d that this is the Use that *some* have made of it, and that it has been over-ruled for *their Advantage*. And now should not this Consideration in some Measure moderate our Resentment of the supposed Injury, and make us the more ready to pass it by? *Joseph* seems to be of this Mind with Respect to *his Brethren*, when they ask his Forgiveness of the Wrong they had done him: He speaks of it as that which should induce him the more freely and readily to grant their Request, that tho’ *they thought Evil against him*, God meant it *unto Good*. And how much more should it be so in this Case, when both God and *Man*, as we trust, meant it not for Evil, but for Good.

I may say much the same, as to what is said of the *College*. Mr. *Whitefield* seems to lament that the Students there have had such a corrupt Taste as to *the Authors* that have been in the greatest Repute, and most read among them. And I suppose you have heard some serious Divines among our selves often lament the same: I’m sure I have, tho’ I was not always exactly of the same Sentiments as to their being so much Cause of Lamentation upon that Account. He further seems to lament that there was not more Care taken of the Youth as to Things of a *spiritual Nature*; and that they were not more seriously and closely applied to upon that Account. I have heard a *venerable Doctor* now with God, make the same Complaint with Respect to the College some Years ago: And several that have since come from thence have told me with a good deal of seeming Concern, that they [never had a Word said to them there, upon any Thing of this Nature. Now as much as I value some of the Gentlemen of the College, I don’t think it is so gross an Affront to imagine, they might in some Respects have discharg’d their Trust better, and that it’s a Thing impossible that any Manner of Blame should belong to them. If Mr. *Whitefield*’s Informers and the other young Gentlemen have given a *false Report*, they are worthy of Blame. If what they have said be *true*, it’s either needless, or a Thing of but little Consequence, for the Youth there,

there, tho' they are many of them likely to have the Care of other's Souls, to be seriously and frequently discoursed with concerning their own, and for any great Care to be taken that they may themselves be the early Subjects of a real Change; or else those that have had the Charge of them are not altogether free from Fault: and as I can't think them above Admonition, it's Pity that any Circumstance respecting the Person that gives it, or the Manner in which it's given, should so far raise their Anger as to deprive them of the Benefit of it. I am truly sorry to see it meeting with so warm a Resentment from them, and to find such a Handle made of it by so many of my Brethren.

It might be look'd upon by some as rash and unwarrantable in Dr. Burnet, and as bearing too hard upon the Clergy of *his own Church*, and even upon the *Seats of Learning*, publickly to say as he does in his *Preface to his Pastoral Care*, 'That the much greater Part of those that came to be ordain'd, are ignorant to a Degree not to be apprehended by those who are not oblig'd to know. The easiest Part of Knowledge, says he, is that to which they are the greatest Strangers; I mean the plainest Parts of Scripture, which they say in Excuse of their Ignorance, that their *Tutors* in the *Universities* never mention the Reading of to them; so that they can give no Account, or at least a very imperfect one of the Contents even of the Gospel.' This he says, and a great deal more to the like Purpose. But I never heard that it enrag'd the serious Part of the Clergy; and I don't believe they would any of them have bar'd their Pulpits against him, had they the Power to do it.

Thus Brethren, I have consider'd you as going upon the Supposition that Mr. *Whitefield* has been heretofore the Instrument of a great deal of Mischief to the Churches of this Land; and have given you the Reasons of my Dissent from you upon that Head.

And then,

II. You suppose there is a Prospect of yet further Mischief should he be indulg'd the Liberty of preaching to the People of your Charge, and are therefore determin'd not to admit him into your Pulpits.

But not having Penetration enough to discern any just Grounds for such a Supposition, I must here also take Leave to be of a different Opinion.

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As for *Itinerant Preaching* in general, enough I think has been said upon it. I shall only add, that I have been something surprized to find some Men in Reputation for Sense and Learning talking of it as they have done, as a Thing not now to be tolerated where there are stated Ministers, even supposing no particular and express Direction to be given for it in Scripture. It's often pleaded, and I believe pretty generally granted, that there is no such exact Model of Discipline and Management laid down in the Word of God, to be observ'd by the Church of CHRIST in all the Ages of it, but that there are some Things left to humane Prudence as the Circumstance of Time and Place may require. Accordingly the Church of *England* seems to look upon *Itinerant Preachers* as proper at this Day. There have been Persons employ'd under that Character, and call'd by that Name in these Colonies by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; and I have seen a printed Account of their Preaching from Town to Town.

And as to the Objection of any One's taking this upon himself; I believe when you find one of so much Self-denial to itinerate as Mr. *Whitefield* does; one so well recommended by Men of Learning and Piety abroad; one that upon taking a little Pains, you may satisfy your selves has his Attainments in Knowledge and Grace; one that is of the like Faith and Conversation, and as far as you are able to judge, has such a flaming Love to CHRIST, and deep Concern for Souls; and one whom God has so far own'd and honour'd with so much Success; you will have no just Reason to question his Call or Qualifications. If when he was formerly among us, he was upon some Accounts rash, all Things being consider'd we need not wonder at it. But he has now had further Experience and Time to observe and correct his Mistakes. And what just Apprehensions you can have of Mischief to your selves or to your People by admitting him into your Pulpits, I can't easily conceive. Does he preach any other Doctrines than were preach'd by the *first Reformers*, and by our *pious Predecessors*; any other than were held by them, and are held by us to be agreeable to the Form of sound Words contain'd in the Scriptures, and to the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints? If any of you preach different Doctrines, I don't wonder that you are something fearful of receiving him into your Pulpits. In this Case it may be hurtful to you at present, tho' even then it might be of eminent Service to you and your People in the End. But I take it for granted that it's otherwise
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with the most, if not all of you : And if you are Preachers of the same Doctrines, what Apprehensions can you have of Danger from him ? If we should feel ourselves unduly mov'd, and find our Corruptions rais'd at his superiour Fame, and the great Applause he meets with among our People, it may serve to shew us the Wickedness of our own Hearts. However angry we may be at any one's having the Epithet of *Half Devil*, we may from thence see that we have too much of the Temper of the wicked One, and should endeavour to check and suppress that *Spirit that lusteth to Envy*. Has that great Head of the Church, who acts his own Sovereignty in bestowing his Gifts, furnish'd this Servant of his with some distinguishing Endowments, shall we disown them, or go about to lessen them ? No ; on the contrary, let us be willing to see, and ready to acknowledge them to the Glory of the free and bountiful Bestower of them, and don't let *our Eye be evil because He is good*. If we faithfully devote ourselves to our Work, we need not be under any distressing Fears of losing our Esteem among our People, we shall have as much of it as will be best. And I'm satisfied that your admitting Mr. *Whitefield* into your Pulpits, where the greater Part of your People are not prejudiced against him, will tend rather to increase than diminish it. Your Resolution to keep him out, instead of being of any Service, will, I am perswaded, be of hurtful Tendency as to what I am now speaking of : Especially if whilst you debar him your Pulpits, you are ready to admit almost any others, tho' it may be not well qualified upon any Account, it will be apt to raise Jealousies in many of your Hearers, and to lessen your Interest in their Affection and Regard. And as there can be no just Apprehension of Mischief to yourselves by encouraging Mr. *Whitefield's* preaching to the People of your Charge, what but a groundless and merely imaginary Prospect can you have of Mischief to them ? There has, I trust, been much Good done where he has been freely admitted ; but who have been hurt by his Ministry ? I have joyfully and thankfully receiv'd him into my Pulpit as often as there has been Opportunity for it ; and I hope many of the dear People with whom I am more immediately concern'd, will have Cause of blessing God eternally on his Account : But I am not conscious of any Mischief that has accrued from his Preaching. Thro' the unmerited Favour of Heaven we are as free from Confusions, and enjoy as much Peace as any Congregation I

know of. So far is he from giving Countenance to Separations or other Disorders, that I have often heard him bear Testimony against them. And I assure you, if I had been instrumental of preventing one from preaching to this People, whose Labours God had so remarkably bless'd, and whom he had made instrumental of saving Good to so many Souls, I should have been fearful whether I had not been a Means of obstructing their eternal Interests; and as I should have been unable to have answer'd it to God or my own Conscience, I should have laid a Foundation for great Unasiness and Perplexity of Mind.

Thus Brethren I have consider'd the Supposition you have gone upon in your Conduct with Respect to Mr. *Whitefield*, and have shewn you why it does not appear to me to be well grounded.

And now Brethren, tho' these Things may have no Weight at all with you, and tho' you may still think you are in the Right in shutting out of your Pulpits this zealous Preacher of Christ, and his pure Gospel; give me Leave to ask whether you are able upon a cool and calm Thought of Things to approve of the Spirit and Temper that appears in what some of you have published relating to him; and whether you can reflect upon it with any real Satisfaction of Mind? Is it fitting to speak of him in so angry and insulting a Way, and to let your Expressions favour of so much Wrath and Bitterness? Is this a true Gospel Spirit? Even tho' we were *reviled*, would it become us to *revile again*? Did our Lord and Master do thus? No; he has left us a Pattern of a quite contrary Spirit, and it peculiarly becomes his Ministers to learn of him who was meek and lowly in Heart. And then further, Is that Spirit of rash Judging, that discovers itself in some of your Writings a Thing that will admit of a fair and easy Defence? You are sensible there have been sad Complaints of the Prevalency of such a Spirit of late; and it is greatly to be regretted that there has been any Occasion for them. You don't like that any should take upon them to know and judge the Hearts of others; to pronounce them Pharisees, and to fix any such like opprobrious Characters upon them. And I assure you I am as far as any of you from approving the Practice, and yet I am greatly mistaken if you are not some of you doing the same Thing with Respect to Mr. *Whitefield*. You expressly speak of his *sanctimonious Pretences*; you charge him with the *Osentation of a proud Pharisee*, and with carrying on the most wicked and hypocritical Designs.

Designs. Now is this *rash* judging a Crime in itself, and what you severely censure in others, and is it excuseable in you? Have not one and another of you been complaining of it as one of the Disorders of the present Times, and speaking of it as a Fault? How then can I forbear saying, *Out of thine own Mouth thou art condemned? wherein thou judgest another, condemnest thou not thy self, seeing thou that judgest dost the same Thing?*

And then it seems to me, and some other of your Brethren, that it would have been as well if some of you had not been quite so forward in censuring others besides Mr. *Whitefield*. Whilst you have been charging him with Want of Respect to his Superiours in Age, and also in Learning and Grace; have not some of you, that are but young, shewn your selves defective upon the like Account, in speaking so severely of your Fathers that have countenanced Mr *Whitefield's* preaching among us? Especially in representing those in such an odious Light, and as having acted so unbecoming a Part, that have ask'd him to assist in the Administration of the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; which must point more particularly at the venerable Mr. CHEVER of *Chelsea*, and the venerable Dr. COLMAN of *Boston*? Methinks that ancient Injunction should have been some Check to you, *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary Head, and honour the Face of the old Man*: And that it had been better for those of you that are so much their Inferiours in Years, and it may be upon other Accounts, to have tarried a little longer, at least to have waited 'till you had some Discourse with those ancient and worthy Divines, and heard what they had to say in their own Defence, before you had thus publicly animadverted upon them.

But after all, however it may be with some, I can't but hope that many of you, tho' you may have conceiv'd a Dislike to some Part of Mr. *Whitefield's* Conduct, and don't think it best to call him in to your Assistance in your Labours; are under no such Prejudices, but that you think well of him in the main, and account him a faithful Servant of JESUS CHRIST. But then I'm sure if it be so, and you have any true Love for the Master whom he serves; you must needs be in some Measure affected with the restless Rage and bitter Enmity with which he is constantly pursued, and feel some Relentings of Heart on the Account of the cruel and hard Usage he from Time to Time meets with. And here I would take Leave to propose it to
you

you as a Thing worthy of Consideration, Whether in what you have done, you have not help'd to strengthen the Hands of those that are Enemies to true and vital Religion, and given too much Countenance to them? For whether you are sensible of it or no, they are all to a Man much gratified with what you have done. I would not, Brethren, be understood as exhibiting so gross a Charge against you, as that you have been doing this by Design; nor would I be thought to include all that approve of your Conduct among the Enemies of Religion: No; I make no Doubt but some of its Friends and Patrons, by some Means or other, may be led into some Sort of Disaffection to Mr. *Whitefield*, and may in the main be well pleased with your Manner of proceeding against him. But I am satisfied it is grievous to by far the greater Part of the Generation of God's Children; and as I before said, has gain'd you the universal Approbation of Persons of a contrary Character. I dare say, there is not a *Deist*, an *Arian*, a *Socinian*, &c. that there is not a *profane Person*, a *Sensualist*, or any *immoral Liver* in the whole Country, not one of corrupt Principles, or dissolute Manners, but what has a much higher Esteem of you, than before. Persons of this Character are loading you with their Applauses, and think they can't say too much in your Praise. Much Good may it do you; I envy you not the Honour of their Applause.

I have omitted saying any Thing to some of your Objections against Mr. *Whitefield*, partly because I think enough has been said to them by others, and partly for Fear of extending my Letter to too great a Length.

And now, Brethren, if I have in any Thing express'd my self in an unbecoming Manner, and so as to lay my self open to your just Repentment, as I have not done it sensibly and by Design, I hope I shall have your Excuse: And as what has been written is well meant, I shall be glad if it be well receiv'd, and pray that the Things suggested may meet with a mature Deliberation.

Upon the whole, If you can't be persuaded but that I have too high an Opinion of Mr. *Whitefield*, and question whether he be the Person I conceive him to be: I would only further say to you, *Come and see*, converse with him freely and without Prejudice, as I trust that I and many others have done; and I make no Doubt but you'll discover as much of CHRIST in him; that you'll see as shining a Pattern of Love to God and Man, of Meekness, Humility and Self-denial;

a Pattern of as much true Zeal for the promoting of that *Kingdom of GOD, which is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost*; as great an Example of Diligence, and a careful redeeming of Time, as you have beheld in any one you have been acquainted with.

And now Brethren, May you and I be *Followers of him in all Things wherein he follows CHRIST*. Particularly, May all *Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil speaking* be put away from us, with all *Malice*: May we be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as *GOD for CHRIST's Sake forgives us*.

And Oh! that the sweet and peaceable Spirit of the Gospel might universally spread and prevail: That the Time may come when the *Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid; the Calf, the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child shall lead them*: When they shall not hurt or destroy in all *GOD's holy Mountain*; when the *Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the LORD, as the Waters cover the Sea*. For *Zion's Sake* let us not hold our Peace, and for *Jerusalem's Sake* let us not rest, 'till we perceive this glorious Day to dawn, and 'till the *Darkness and Shadows* begin to flee away. Wishing and looking for it,

I conclude and remain,

Your very affectionate Friend and Brother,

Portsmouth, May 3. 1745.

William Shurtleff.





A P P E N D I X.

To our Rev. Brethren in the Ministry,
who refuse the Rev. Mr. *Whitefield*
their Pulpits.

Rev. and Beloved,

WE whose Names are underwritten, being at the House of our dear Brother, the Reverend Mr. *William Shurtleff*, at *Portsmouth*; he was pleased to communicate to us what he had written, with Respect to the Reverend Mr. *Whitefield*: And we do readily embrace this Opportunity of testifying our Satisfaction therewith; and heartily wish that what he has judiciously prepared for the Press, and is hereby likely to fall into your Hands, may be accompanied with the divine Blessing, to change your Thoughts with Respect to the Reverend Mr. *Whitefield*, whose Praise is deservedly in many of the Churches of our dear REDEEMER, in this Land; and your Determination, which we think, and must be so free as to say, appears to us without Foundation, that you should refuse him the Liberty of your Pulpits. We cannot but express our Thankfulness to GOD, who has rais'd up Mr. *Whitefield*, and evidently owned and honoured him with so much Success in preaching the everlasting Gospel of JESUS CHRIST in this Land; and so graciously conducted him, as that he can in our Judgment, by no Means be the culpable Cause of any Divisions or Separations that have prevailed in any of our Churches. And we earnestly desire, that such of our reverend and dear Brethren, as labour under any Prejudices with Respect to Mr. *Whitefield*, would
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take the Opportunity freely to converse with him : In so doing, we doubt not but Prejudices would be removed, he would be wel-com'd into Pulpits, and probably become instrumental of reviving and carrying on the glorious Work of God in your respective Charges ; which would be further Ground of Joy and Rejoycing to us, who are your Brethren and Fellow Labourers in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Jeremiah Wise, Pastor of the Church in *Berwick*.

John Rogers, Pastor of the second Church in *Kittery*.

James Pike, Pastor of the Church in *Somersworth*.

Samuel Chandler, Pastor of the second Church in *York*.



